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MARY WOODWELL

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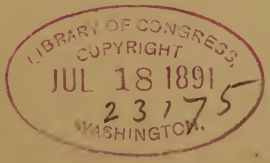
MARY WOODWELL

A MEDLEY

BY C. C. LORD



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Hopkinton, N. H.

PRELUDE.

OUT of the shadow, something sings;
The prospect dim, the end obscure,
Evokes a theme of clearer things,
Bright music sweet, to thought allure.

Out of the burden, something sings;
The cumbrous weight, the tiresome load,
A descant wakes that blithely springs,
And, vocal, cheers the weary road.

Out of the straitness, something sings;
The narrow bound, the crowded place,
Evolves a strain on restless wings
That soars and floats in amplest space.

Out of the silence, something sings;
The tuneless hour, the voiceless time,
Is thrilled by melody that brings,
From God's great heart, a hope sublime.

MARY WOODWELL.

THERE is a slope that, down the eastern hill,
Glides to the western vale, where a bright stream
Descends, a silver line, that, wavy, gleams
And makes the prospect of the landscape sweet.
A village nestles by the river bright,
And, far around, the hills and mountains rise,
While here and there the eye, for rare delight,
Roams o'er the scene the lofty heights enclose.
Thus from the eastern hill, on some rare day,
One looks and thinks of nature in a dream.[1]

Perchance to muse on fertile legends old,
One sits upon the brow of old Gould's hill,[2]
And looks aross the vale of Contoocook,
In quiet loveliness. The car of day
Hies to the west, and in soft radiance
Decks in rare lustre all the distant peaks;
Bold Kearsarge,[3] the tamer Minks,[4] and all
The mounts and hills that skirt the bounded west,
In fancy form a line of gilded wards
That keep the peace below where beauty sleeps.

O balm in such a scene to soothe the brain
In stress of thoughtful toils! Who sees, his mind
Drops its dull cares and courts sweet reverie,
As with uncovered head he takes the breath
Of gentle zephyrs on his fevered brow.
The burdened thought rolls off, and then, for pain,
Lithe fancy weaves a mantle of delight
And casts it on him, and his grief is o'er;
And haply then he cons departed years,
And reads a legend in his waking dream.

Interlude.

SWEET friend, thy wonder wakes to mark mine eyes
As fixed on scenes beyond, or land, or sea;
I look past clouds where sunlight glints and dies,
While talking still with thee.

Mine eyes express the burden of my heart;
My contemplation views celestial fields,
Where love walks free and dear ones never part,
When absence o'er me steals.

Thou and the present form my soul's delight,
But time's swift raptures but a moment stay;
My captive spirit craves its onward flight
With thee to endless day.

FAR back in early days,[5] as runs a tale,
Just down the slope, where curves the broad highway,
There stood a garrison,[6] that kept the key
Of safety of the dwellers in the wild.
Brave David Woodwell there had fixed a home,
And to its shelter all his household brought;
And when the distant sun dropped down the west,
His neighbor Burbank,[7] christened Samuel,
With wife and children shared the stronger roof;
For direful war in menace held the land,
And the red savage roamed with weapons keen.[8]

As thus one evening, gathered for the night,
The double household whiled the hours away,
Brave Woodwell and sound Burbank talked like men,
And told what great awards of peace would come,
If once, like Louisburg one year ago,[9]
Quebec should fall, and all the French redoubts,
From north to south, should to the English turn;
For then the redskins, with no French allies,
Would soon succumb to English prowess bold.

Dame Woodwell and Dame Burbank plied their hands
With knitting-work, and though of solemn mind
In danger's hour, discoursed as women do
Whose hearts on home are fixed, and counted seams,
And narrowings, and stitches, and disclosed

The mysteries of shapely leg and foot;
And then anon a bit of gossip caught
Their passing moods, as how Dame Putney[10] fared,
And how Dame Kimball[11] kept her household ways.

There too was youth, but youthful ones but once
Gave thought to dread, and then to pleasure hied.
A simple string upon their fingers twirled—
Cratch cradle—filled their buoyant hearts with glee,
Unless a throb incautious in the breast
Of youthful manhood proved anew the strength
Of the old passion to annoy our peace;
For Mary Woodwell was a child of grace,
And in nine days would bloom in sixteen,[12] sweet,
With face, and form, and mien all glorious;
And he who thought what was and what might be
Felt his small world revolve in pain, and sighed.

The candle burned and told the hour of nine,[13]
And then was stillness. Goodman Woodwell read
A passage from the Book, and all were bowed
While he invoked the Throne and made their quest
Known to the Highest; for all were of those
Who feared the Lord, and His almighty arm
Was their defence;[14] then, for the curtained eve,
That all things be disposed, the goodman piled
The ashes on the coals, for next day's fire;
And last the April night had boundless sway.

Interlude.

THE shadows lightly grope their sombre way,
The twilight lingers; from the western sky
The half-veiled moon looks forth, her placid eye
Beholding the last scene, the dying day.

The hour is hushed; far in the drowsy vale,
A deep bell peals, just once, and tolls a knell;
A distant bird trills softly one farewell,
A single sigh breathes on the lisping gale.

Then silence reigns supreme. O solemn change,
When day to night is passing! How we think
Of what is and is not, as on the brink
Of destiny unsolved, profound and strange!

Yet day goes sweetly to its gentle close;
The semblance of bright peace is ever dear
And pleasant; calmly oft time glides to cheer
The inner heart and chide each hint of woes.

O soul reflective, hope that oft the light
Of life dies thus—that nature at the last
Oft breathes farewell; and then, all trials passed,
The scene dissolves in weird and soft delight!

But while we muse, dark Erebus unbars
His deepest gloom; earth quickly sinks to rest;
The watchful moon drops down the shaded west,
And thought takes up the promise of the stars.

THE shrouded night in hope abides, but who
Forecasts the coming day? Fair innocence
In soft repose oft dreams of happiness
While foes complot its doom. The garrison
Was wreathed in shadows, and its trusting souls
Slept calmly, as white lilies fold their leaves
And drop upon the bosom of the lake,
To ope and greet with smiles to-morrow's sun,
Refreshed in bloom and perfume, though the morn
But shows the ruthless hand that plucks their pride.

The first bright rays broke from the sunlit east,
And Goodman Woodwell's garrison was stirred,
As busy bees respond to daylight's call
To duty and reward. A thoughtless man,
Of safety only careless, sought the fold,
Where dwelt the needful kine; across a path,
Just westward, the stockade was rudely wrought,
Strong in its homeliness; to feed the cows,
He thither went, but left the door ajar
That kept the garrison; in rushed the foe
That lurked for spoil of guileless flesh and blood.

The startled inmates, all save two, were made
The foe's fierce pleasure. He who sought the kine
Was captured; he was one of eight, who were
The goodmen two, with two fair sons of each—

Of Woodwell, Benjamin and Thomas, lads
Of goodly mien and fraught with promise high—
Of Burbank, Caleb lithe, and Jonathan,
His peer in gifts that nourish youthful pride—
Dame Woodwell, too, in savage bondage held
For sadder fate, and Mary by her side,
In bonds barbaric, sweetest of the fair,
A maiden morning gemmed with dew of tears.

Distinction fateful, strange! Of two escaped,
One was a soldier; trained for courage vast
And deadly valor, he was found no more:
The wilderness received him in his flight.
Dame Burbank, also free, had odd recourse:
The cellar sought for safety, there she turned
The one half headless barrel o'er herself,
And thus eluded all her stupid foes.
Yet think not that this scene was strangely void
Of one brave act that proves a heart of steel.
Dame Woodwell, fearless, of an iron grasp,
From one red savage wrenched his deadly knife,
And would have pierced him through, but for her friends,
Who deemed the act of dreadful consequence
To each and all; but still Dame Woodwell held
The weapon hers in triumph, and she cast
It in the well beyond a savage hand.

Sweet Mary, too, was not of those who pale
In face of danger, and she fought her foes
As a fair maiden might, with hands inured
Alone to kindly toils, till once her breast
Was by a musket pressed in savage hands,
Intent on blood; but even then great fate
Its strange assertion made; the savage chief,
Who led the captors, thought of kindness old,
That Goodman Woodwell erst to him had shown,
And rescued Mary, taking her himself
As his own captive; Penno was his name;
Thus he confirmed the oft reputed grace
Of thankfulness within a savage heart.
Such deeds transacted, captures made complete,
The red men turned their thoughts to other scenes,
Where sons of France paid bounties for the slaves
Of war and pillage, hoping for the price
Of their redemption, while their coffers filled
With gold accursed, or where perchance the hand
That captured still retained its cruel sway
For the same purpose vile, and straightway led
Their gloomy captives on, with faces bent
Upon the dim, relentless, cold north star.

Interlude.

THE sun looks o'er the eastern hill,
And swiftly all the world awakes
To lustrous, beaming light, that breaks
In rays that all the landscape fill
With scenes to make the morning glad;
But, clouded by uncertain doom,
The heart repines in helpless gloom,—
Farewell, sweet home, the morn is sad!

The sun mounts up the mid-day height,
And decks the shining world, ablaze
With splendor cast on sunlit days
Of happy spring, to joy invite
By charms that noon to morn can add;
Yet fear enshrouds pale hope the more,
As that dark shadow walks before,—
Farewell, sweet home, the noon is sad!

The sun sinks down the western sky,
And softly evening hues unfold
In richest purple, red, and gold,
In pride displayed, to bless the eye,
As night steals on; but thought grows mad,
As daylight dies with crimson glow
Portentous, as of blood-stained woe,—
Farewell, sweet home, the night is sad!

THE captive train, with vain regrets and tears,
To urgent mandates of their savage guides,
Their footsteps hastened; forth they went in pain
On their sad northern course; at first they took
The path that shows the silver Contoocook
Receiving waters from old Warner's stream,
The ancient Almstry;[15] there they crossed a ford
To take the Almstry upward in the vale,
To find an early sawmill, two miles on,[16]
To which the redskins gave the doom of flame,
And then kept on; at length they turned aside
Through present Sutton to New London, there
To touch the Little Sunapee by east,
Its crystal waters smiling in the sun,
Unheeded; onward still the restless band
Pressed hard, to skirt upon the western brink
The lake Mascoma called, its limpid waves,
In rippling music on a pebbly shore,
In vain appealing to the ear of woe;
The swift Connecticut of endless flow
They next beheld in haste, and upstream fast
Pursued their ceaseless way, and where the hills
Slope either way to aid the western flow
Of old St. Francis, once again they turned,
To follow down to old St. Peter's lake,
Their course there halting; for the savage tribe,
Whose emissaries wrought the dire distress

That prompts this narrative, held there their haunt
And chief abode, and served their French allies:
St. Francis was the name of this wild tribe
Who captive held the rarest English maid.

Nor think this journey thus so briefly told
Was void of incident; twelve doleful days
The captives, pitiful in plight and mien,
Kept on their dismal way; through wood and wild,
O'er stone and log, through snow and waters cold,
They plodded on; but once, at eve, each day
They paused for food, and then the rude repast
Was chiefly flesh such as the savage loves,
And from which turns refinement in disgust.
One eve, in greater stress, a dog was served,
From which poor Mary turned with loathing sick;
Yet once again strange fate revived her heart:
Her savage master, Penno, saw her faint
And hungry, though the wretched meal was spread,
And his wild heart was touched; forth with his gun
He sought a nobler fare, and by his skill
A pied and thrifty bird, that pecked a tree,
Became her portion at the setting sun;
And she was comforted, and thanked her Lord,
Who knew His child though in her worst distress.
But life foredoomed to sad monotony
Knew little cause to turn the thought aside

From the long agony; each early morn,
The painful feet resumed the doleful path,
And all day long the famished spirit sank,
Till eve a trifling sense of life renewed.
The pause at wild St. Francis came at length;
But then the heart was calloused unto grief,
And the dull thought of fate had slight regard,
Its skill too powerless; and Mary fair
Was bartered to a squaw of aspect fierce,
And she feared not; and Jonathan, the son
Of Goodman Burbank, found a master rude
And savage, but his youthful heart was numb;
The other six, on whom fell woes unkind,
Still journeyed on, but parting heard no cries,
And, on the lofty heights of French Quebec,
They ceased at last, to wait time's dim decree.

Interlude.

DEAR love, behold, the breezes blow,
By night or day and idly play,
Nor reck a breath for weal or woe,
So glide the hours away.

A tempest sweeps across the sky,
Though earth is sad the storm is glad,
O'er tender forms that live or die,
The thoughtless scene is mad.

On, on, the seasons roll, and keep
  Their endless course with wasting force,
Resistless, though we laugh or weep,—
  Dumb fate, without recourse.

The soul of faith yet feels a wave
  Of balm that steals within and heals
The thought with peace, or gay, or grave,
  Thy own sweet face reveals.

THE curtain of the sunset drops in haste,
But night is long. Sad Mary Woodwell found
Her captive state full soon, but sudden woe
Forecast a long despair. Youth's careless bloom,
Consigned to pale solicitude, grew faint
And lustreless. The child of grace, a slave,
Her tissues changed to brawn, in labor oft,
Knew the dull tasks that wrong makes doubly sore,
And pined in dreariness. She grew and plucked
The corn; the samp she pounded; through the wilds
She sought the native fruits for savage sale;
And on this toil no bright redemption shone.
Yet Mercy through life's clouds sheds rays of hope,
Or the tried heart must break, though hope is oft
Companion of sharp grief. One hopeful day,
Her father came, and sire and daughter knew
The joy of recognition, long denied.

The best of all to noble nature hers,
Her sire was free. Redemption kind had rent
His bonds in sunder, and with him, indeed,
Two brothers found release. A smile lit up
Her careworn face, and then the cloud returned
With double gloom. An intuition quick
Had made her ask, "And how has mother fared?"
The goodman broke the answer to his child
In sad but gentle tones,—"Your mother dear
Has found the boundless comfort of the saints,
And rests in God; give grief for her no more."
Then Mary struggled with herself, and checked
Her swelling tears and heard the rueful tale—
How from the gloomy prison of the French,
Where Goodman Burbank shared an equal fate,
The earthly form maternal, that she blessed
With love and service dutiful, returned
To its great parent earth, its ransomed soul
Exalted to the skies.[17] Then, comforted
With pious thoughts, sweet Mary gave her mind
A moment to herself and faintly smiled;
For Goodman Woodwell brought a certain price,
In sterling money of the royal realm,
By aid of Chelmsford;[18] and he sought the ear
Of Mary's mistress, savage, yet, perchance,
Touched by the proffer of the world's award,
Would yield her captive; and he told the sum.

Then sorrow poured its flood into his soul,
As the barbaric vixen, filled with greed
Penurious, thus unto him replied:
"The Indian sees the new moon in the sky;
It peeps with one small eye; and then one night
It looks for more to see; and more and more
Its look grows wide, till on the sleeping earth
It turns its face all full as it can be:
And so the pale face brings to me his good,
Bright money; and he lays and lays it down,
Some more, some more, till all the pile shall be
A pound for pound as weighs the girl that grows,
In silver; then he buys and owns his child."
The father and the child then spoke again
But briefly, though he gave her hopeful cheer,
Such as dark prospects entertain, and told
His daughter of the friends resolved and true,
And how one son of Burbank, Jonathan,
Redeemed, was seeking Caleb's ransom too;
And yet, unless the just God otherwise
Had made decree, she gladly would return
To home and loved ones, such as God had left
For earthly recompense and time's reward,
For trials here below; and then he said,
"Put faith in God and wait the blessed day,
When, sorrows past, the faithful enter rest,
No more to dread the world and all its woes."

He took his leave, and Mary gave her heart
To holy cares and let the time abide,
Though oft weak nature shed the falling tear,
Yet symbol not of trust that could not pine.
The faithful father kept the sacred pledge
Made to his child, but long was sad delay.
The savage jade, who Mary held in bonds,
Had heart as has a harpy, fain to wound
The nature sensitive, and, as the hawk,
An eye to quickly see the prey at hand,
And so with zeal infernal she beheld
The weighty prize of blood, and life, and love,
And set her snare. To Mary, slave, she said,
"The pale-face child must dare not give a sign
To wet the eye, or take away the smile,
Or seem to think of home or want it back;
For if her father comes and sees her glad
To go with him, I kill her with a blow."
When Mary heard, she knew not but to play
The part of satisfaction, for within
She thought, "My life is but a little span,
And why unto my father should I add
Another pang, when he shall see me sad,
If he should come again? The blessed joy
Is ours at last, let time do what it may.
So weary weeks and months and even years
Recurred to Goodman Woodwell, for he trod,

Time after time, the rugged wilderness
From Massachusetts where his friends abode,
Up to the southern bound of Canada,
And then returned, the money in his hand;
For she who held his child had cruel moods
Joined to an iron will, and fell despair
Began to deeply darken all his face
And bend his form; for, in the very truth,
Thrice twelve months passed, and Mary still was bound.
But God is merciful to those who wait
His word, though nature shrinks in doubt unkind.

INTERLUDE.

OUT of the dim uncertain haze,
O'erhanging unaccomplished years,
Effulgent, breaks the pledge of days,
Along life's path, besprent with tears,
Hope's message, craved by tongue and pen,—
Adieu until we meet again.

Bright *au revoir!* The mist dissolves
Along time's untrod avenues,
While thought's swift sentiment revolves,
By instinct sped that love indues,
To cry out of the hearts of men,—
Adieu until we meet again.

Sweet promise! What art thou, O soul
Of voice prophetic? Shall the hours
For separation dark that toll
In vain attune when absence lowers?
In this the word of boundless ken,—
Adieu until we meet again?

THERE was, within the circuit of the tribes
That clustered on the low St. Lawrence shore,
A man, a Frenchman born, of high repute
Among the savage clans, who viewed him oft
As one omniscient, for, physician, he
Had skill to soothe a pain and bind a wound,
And, full of mystic lore of drug and herb,
Could cunningly devise the potent spell
That healed distress and make the being glad;
And he, for love of justice to his kind,
Was friend of Mary Woodwell, and he knew
Her secret history and hoped release;
And, by the unseen counsels of her friends,
He sought to gain her cause and liberty.
He found her in the wild, where she had gone
To pluck the native fruits, as was her wont
In time of ripeness, and he strayed, and stayed
A little by her side, and helped her toil;
And then, because he knew the English tongue,
He said, "Would you be free and find a home

Among your friends far from this cruel land?"
Then Mary startled with a tinge of fear,
Though she was glad that thus a kindly tone
Had reached her ear, framed in her native speech,
Though from a stranger, since she captive was
To a hard mistress; and she listened well,
But said, "What can I do in this my plight,
A helpless slave to her who binds me fast,
And claims my very soul to bide her will?"
Then he responded,—"Listen now to me;
Do all I say, and all shall come to pass.
Feign sickness; I will be pretended help,
And make you nauseate with bitter drugs;
And then, when all your nature is oppressed
With sickly hue and feeling, I will tell
Your savage mistress she must sell you soon
Or lose a bounty; for you shall appear
Like one who steps within the gate of death
A moment later; and she will relent
For love of gain in ways penurious,
And you shall purchased be. Your very friends
Are even now all ready for the deed;
Their presence near, you ransom soon shall see,
And, quickly turning well, shall freedom know
And happiness regain with home and kin."
Then Mary felt her heart leap high for joy,
And then it sank as erst; at once she spoke,

As one in holy dread, and thus she said:
"Ah me! But can I do the thing you ask,
Since I was reared in truth, and never yet
A falsehood spoke or acted? for I fear
The Lord who loves alone the upright heart
And hates the lying tongue. Can He regard
A child like me who once forgets His will?"
The kind physician, he of subtler ken,
Her doubt to fain dispel, recounted then
The legends of the sacred Book adored
By Christian faith, and said, "Remember well
How ancient Abraham, in deadly fear,
The son of Gerar did in mind delude,
As once did David, for his life's concern,
The man of Gath deceive with drivelled beard.
Do you as they, and God will bless your deed."
Then she was comforted, encouraged; then
She gave her word, as child like her would do,
In face of one like him of wise discourse
And friendly mien; but promise hardly proved
Her strictest need; a nature delicate,
Refined, and sensitive, could brook no strain
Like that upon her; and that night she tossed
In changing heat and cold, and dread concern
Of wild reflection, till a surging tide
Of anguish in her made her cry for pain.
The savage vixen heard, and loosed her fears;

At Mary's couch she felt the fevered brow
And marked the mind distracted; then she ran
To him, the great physician, knowing all
The secret world and art of medicine,
And told how she who was her bounden slave,
Lay sick and restless, and would need his aid.
Responsive to the call, in haste he came,
A smile without, within deceitfulness,
And, comforting her mistress by his mien,
He Mary plied with potent, bitter draughts,
Too wild and weak to even semblance make
Of slight resistance, and her fell distress
Was quickened. Time fled on and days went by,
But Mary drooped, and drooped, in deeper plight
Of unfeigned sickness, and her aspect bore
The sign of one who hastens to the shade
Of death, the last destroyer of the frame;
And then he, friend and foe in deed combined,
Said, "Sell her, for she hastens to the end
Of life's short journey; gain you what you may."
Alarmed as one who lucre loves alone,
The vixen heeded, and she took his word.
A petty sum, one hundred livres,[19] paid
In pledge, was Mary's ransom from her thrall;
Yet she knew not; and many days had gone,
When, sense returning with her frame restored,
She heard it all, and blessed her Lord, whose hand

Had saved her; and she prayed and pardon sought
For all her sins of will, thought, word, and deed.
That year was also Caleb Burbank freed.

Interlude.

SLIGHT is the wound upon the tireless hand,
Yet verily anon a hint it wakes,
A little pledge of the deep thought's demand
For cause of which the mighty world partakes.

A trifling care perturbs the restless mind,
But from it still a thread reflective leads
To the great scheme of sovereign design,
By which the law unchangeable proceeds.

So insignificant! The deathless heart
A pang infests, but of a boundless soul
A dream thence talks, to patient love impart
The end for which the ceaseless æons roll.

THE mills of God grind slowly, and the heart
Of one who treads the path of sweetest hope
Has need of truest patience. Wisdom high
Takes note of each slight fact and circumstance
That bears upon the progress of a soul,

Whose cause precedes the claims impetuous
Of sense and its delights. Her ransom found
By purchase, Mary Woodwell took her way,
By guidance, up the river to the isle
Of Montreal, where was the namesake town,
To wait the slow decision of the will
Of civil prudence, famed for long delay.
Six weary months she waited for the boon
Of perfect liberty, and then her feet
At last turned homeward. Sturdy Dutchman true,
To ransom negro slaves by Indians caught,
New York their home, had come to Montreal,
And they in kindness would fair Mary guide
Upon her homeward way. Such escort she
In haste accepted, and they lead her on.
They crossed a belt of land beyond the stream,
And, up the Richelieu, of crystal flow,
They sought Champlain, and on its bosom plied
The thirsty oar, or spread the snow-white sail
That pants for breath, and sped the waters o'er,
E'en to Lake George, and thus pursued their way.
Then, taking for a space the land again,
They came to where the Hudson's lapsing course
Bore on to Albany, the place where they
Would gladly be, and where at length they saw
Their journey ended, save the gentle maid
Had farther yet to seek her happy goal.

The rude hearts of the wild have tender mien
Oft for the innocent, and on her way
Sweet Mary saw the gem that shines within
The rougher nature; for the boatmen, bred
To hard concerns, had heard her tale of woe,
And, touched with pity, sought her path to strew
With blossoms of such love as roughness gives
To beauty in distress, and made her bear
The sense of their compassion; and they brought
The choicest food their humble fare allowed,
To set before her; and betimes one lent
His thicker garment for her greater shield
Against the damp, chill breeze that swept the lake,
While she returned the grace of thankfulness
That left that impress pure upon the man
That raised him higher in the scale of good,
And thus wrought blessing. When she found a rest
At pleasant Albany, the good Dutch dames,
That knew the sorrows of her passing lot,
Shed tears, and, in the bounty of their rich,
Kind souls, brought forth the simple, rural aids
To greater comfort, and her heart refreshed
With peace that woman unto woman brings
In sore privation and with sadness worn.

Thus Mary rested and her strength renewed
Until the day when she would gladly take

The last steps homeward. Eastward, miles by land,
Lay her loved birthplace, Hopkinton by name,
In Massachusetts. Thence her father took,
In her young years, and for a better thrift,
His household to a new and rude abode
In high New Hampshire, where the settlers gave
A township wrested from the wilderness
The name of one they loved and left behind,
Still dear to memories of early days.
To that loved home of childhood's rare delights,
By escort wise, fair Mary held her way,
Till, by the patience of great Goodness blessed,
She leaned upon the bosom of her home.
Hers was the greeting of affection true,
But deeper far than that which simply bids
A loved one welcome. There were tears of joy
Such as alone the living shed to see
The life consigned to death revive again,
To comfort and to bless a long despair.
But Mary, moved to strange emotions strong,
Such fervor of embrace could scarcely give
A loving recompense, for she was dazed
With bright reality, and seemed to faint
For strength to bear the dazzling certainty ;
And then they gave her rest and boundless cheer,
In quiet and seclusion, till she felt
Her heart return, and then to all her friends,

Who came from far and near to hear her tale,
She gave the story of her lasting woes
And final glad release; and then they shared
A common wonder at the mighty hand
And purpose marvelous in God's decrees:
So when the holy man, who came with awe,
In presence of omnipotence to save,
Had bowed his head and uttered, "Let us pray!"
They joined in reverence, the while he said,
"O Lord!—But what are we to see this day,
And mark the sureness of Thy mighty word,
With sin so sorely pressed? Forgive us now
Who oft have doubted of thy promises,
And give us faith indeed that e'er may blush
To hold Thy truth but in the world's suspense!"
As thus he prayed, all hearts dissolved, and each
Felt lifted in the sphere of trust divine.

INTERLUDE.

SWEET spirit, 't is thy sacred hour
Of benediction; gently here
Obtains thy consecrated power
O'er him in joy that thou art near,
Yet who hath care in silent fee
Before a faultless soul like thee.

Swift time will fly, thy presence go,
And, brooding o'er a past estate,
He will an apprehension know
That makes dull grief reänimate,
But still betimes will smile to see
That care doth mould a soul like thee.

Thou wilt return again one day,
With him to dwell, O darling sprite,
And be a blissful boon for aye,
Sun of his sun, light of his light,
Nor care shall intervene, for he
Shall be a perfect soul like thee.

TIME has its recompenses, though the soul
Waits nobler evidence of judgment true
Than earth can demonstrate, and hence the thought
Sways oft from grief to joy, when pain withholds
Its dart, and holds in outward specious fee
The compensation partial of the world.
The days in rapid flight receded fast,
And Mary Woodwell, in her outward guise,
Forbade each hint of woe, and to the realm
Of duty gave attention, while she plied
Her hands in useful service, and withal
She wore the cheerful face that speaks of peace
Found best in deed and disposition bent
On tasks ennobling. Thus her life sped on,
Her strange adventures daily less involved

Within the thought and conversation found
Of frequent friends and oft companions dear.
So she became as one who lived and moved
In no eccentric orbit, but whose course
Lay in the common circuit of the sphere
In which she blended. Five full, patient years
She thus existed; but there came a change,
As ever oft the aspect of a life
Knows some departure. She was woman born,
And owned a woman's heart, as ever true
As needle to the pole; and when the young
And noble Jesse Corbett, well esteemed,
Had wooed her oft and kindly, till the zeal
Of love unfeigned unloosed his halting tongue,
To ask the question old, yet ever new
To blooming maidenhood, she felt her heart
Respond with inward thrills of bounding bliss:
And Mary was a maid of sturdy worth
And honest word,—not one who muttered No
And still meant Yes, the while she idly teased,
With art and ruse, the true beseeching heart
Of manhood,—and she gave him thus reply:
"My love, kind Jesse, knits with yours indeed,
As I am honored by your bold request;
If I can serve you nobly, I am glad
To thus requite the worthy homage borne
By you to me; but I must still remind

Your thoughtful sense that I am but a maid
To sorrow born that chides a glozing world,
And turns the mind to surer aims and ends
Than earth can promise by its luring gifts.
If you and I consent to stem the tide
Together of this nature's toil and pain,
We may at least find comfort of our souls,
Each helping each spur onward to the goal
Of God's great blessing. Other things entice
Me not. Wed not your anxious life to mine,
While the world's pride commands your one desire."
While Jesse Corbett listened, all his faith
Renewed and strengthened; for he was a man
In thought and purpose godly—not as one
Who whines and prates and to the world displays
His proud profession, but he served the Lord
In daily walk and conversation meek.
So they were married; and, as custom oft
Did then prevail, they sought a newer home
And scene just rescued from the northern wild;
New Hampshire beckoned back its ransomed lost,
And Corbett led his faithful, blushing bride
To the same spot where, just nine years before,
She met the doleful fate that tried her soul,
And cast a shade forever on her path
Through life's deep valley. There they set their bounds
And reared their altar; and their rest was found.

The garrison had fallen to decay,
And Corbett restoration duly made
Till reconstruction wrought its perfect end,
And all the place was fairer; yet was thought
Still mindful, by each passing fact and sign,
Of the dread tragedy, as from the well
Was drawn the savage knife, a trophy rare
Of woman's daring deed in danger dire;
And ever path, and door, and implement
Suggested oft the scenes of that dark day.
Brisk Corbett felled the wood, and sowed the field,
And trained the orchard, which in years before
Brave Goodman Woodwell planted,[20] and he gave
The land its increase, rich reward of wise
And patient labor. Mary, too, within
Her pleasant walls, the household pledge of love
Kept bright and shining by her labors due
And smiles unchanging. Plenty spread the board
With tempting products of the goodwife's skill,
Though oft the cards, the wheel, the patient loom,
And all the incidents constructive of
The sphere domestic, gave their sure attest
Of her great virtue who was wife and queen.
Yet greater still was love's prosperity;
Two gentle boys, the first Josiah named,
The other, Jesse, made the household gleam
With purer radiance of love's sweet fire,

And all the home was happy; then at once
The providential word evoked the sign
That earth is transient, and the world's delight
Is but a moment in its permanence.
Four brief years fled, and then the piercing stroke
Fell suddenly and wounded all the scene.
Strong Corbett, mindless of uncertain fate,
With flooded banks would fain the Almstry swim,
And, prowess failing, sank beneath the stream,
His lifeless form far rolling 'neath the wave
To ancient Dunstable—the Contoocook
And Merrimack its dead weight carrying—
And only rescued there from the cold depths
For Christian burial. O sore the dart
That struck the soul of hapless Mary then,
With her two infant boys! for he was not,
Who gave them home and blest security.
Yet Mary was like those who take the cross
With greater ease upon the shoulders tried
And calloused by the burden often borne;
And she had patient been in loneliness
Had trust divine been then of her unknown.

Thus life wore on, and Mary in her home
Was found the daily servant of the will
Of Him who in the hollow of His hand
Holds fate and circumstance. Her household ways

Still proved the models of her sisters kind,
Who came with sympathy to ease her heart,
And for her comfort smile, and speak the words
That bear the accents of undying peace.
Her tender boys in favor grew apace,
In wisdom trained that fits the childish ear,
With fair example that to conscience gives
Its perfect evidence; and all was well.
Then, in the time that faultless Wisdom chose,
There came transition. This, a shifting world,
Has strange reactions. Once a pain we bear,
And then a pleasure lures us from our grief.
The darkest cloud precedes the sunlight clear,
By greater contrast doubled in its gleam.
So Mary's life renewed its household light,
And she was solaced with the bliss of home
Made consecrate with wifely love, returned
By manhood virtuous, and true, and kind:
And then her humble hearthstone glowed amain
With rarer lustre, and her heart was full;
And to the Lord she gave her thankful praise.
Good Jeremiah Fowler was her spouse,
And five fair children blessed the sacred bond
And holy union, e'er again she wore
The weeds of widowhood, and still her God
Praised for His goodness, while her eyes above
She turned for treasure of her future days.

Interlude.

IT was a moment—time as long
As oft is when a sudden thought,
Quick offspring of conviction strong,
Within the depths of mind is wrought;
Ours was like magic vision, keen
To catch, within a mystic space,
A view to other eyes unseen,
As we stood looking, face to face.

We met, beheld, but made no sign;
The world discerned no inward spring
Of rarer instinct, force divine,
To life's deep recognition bring;
Nor earth shall tell, with subtle glance
And gesture, of a time and place,
And each romantic circumstance,
When we stood looking, face to face.

Yet since, above, beyond, and through
The dark environment of sense,
We mark a co-relation true,
That needs no outward evidence;
Our souls betimes steal forth and meet
Each other in the rapt embrace
Of silent love's assurance sweet,
And thus stand looking, face to face.

THE subtle motion of the restless mind,
In mystic phase and contemplation, oft
The wisest thought surprises. In this tale,
Which multiplies the scenes of dark distress,
Is seen the elevation of the soul
That springs from pain triumphant to the life
Of ripe fruition in the sphere of love
And holy mission. Mystery indeed
Such consummation is to those who feel
And see it working in the deeper holds
Of being! Far more strange to those that mark
Alone its outward aspect! Godliness,
In heart and mind exultant, is the theme
That angels study till their sacred lips
Are dumb with silence for the view of truth
Too deep for utterance, and even while
The realm of surer vision, far enlarged,
In inner sense and outward evidence,
Outreaches space and time, and oft supplants
The eye of nature, blinded by the sun
Of the rapt spirit, tried and purified.
Like foretaste, they, the saints that dwell below,
Reward of patience in the path of trust,
Oft know in feebler measure, and they see
The stars above, while yet their feet below
Creep on the passages of earth's dark night.
So often Mary Woodwell, in her youth,

Caught glimpses of the sky in days of dark,
And when her riper faith evolved in light,
And clear assurance of direction true,
And even tender in the path of pain,
She saw in lesser view as she was seen
Of Him who, Minister as well as Lord,
Had e'er remembered mercy ; and as those
Who fain release the fact to fondly grasp
The rich ideal, she attachment gave,
In the last stage of this, her mortal life,
To that ideal band who fain would be
Exempt from earth's desires, and only know
The joys that dwell forever in the heart
Of holy love and chastity unfeigned.
A son and two fair grandsons[21] of the maid
And matron taught of woe, had respite found
Of all time's troubles in the peaceful town
Of Enfield,[22] where the Shakers, virgin sons
And daughters of the twice incarnate Lord,[23]
Held their chaste court and kept the world at bay.
With silent longing, likewise aspirant
Of purer pleasure, Mary kept her thought
At first, and gave no accent to the love
That burned within her. Then her second spouse,
In answer to the summons of his God,
Passed to the promise of life consecrate,[24]
And she was free of bonds she would not break

For a rapt fancy, though still unprofane:
Yet when the solemn rites, of duty claimed
And sacred pleasure prompted, to the name
And memory of him who shared in faith
Her lot domestic, full accomplished were,
Her lips no more withheld the silent thought
And purpose of her soul. Then they who heard,
With patience in regret, did fain implore
And bid her banish all the vain conceit.
"Your heart is sad," they said, "your grief is deep
For a fond husband lost to earthly love;
But when the burden of your present woe
Rolls off with time and change, you shall have peace
In social ways accustomed. Chide your care
For life so strange and more for you unmeet!"
But she said, "Nay, dear friends, I am not grieved
Beyond true consolation in the face
Of such great mercy as the Lord bestows
On those that trust Him. I have wept before,
And found Him gracious. Do not deem me now
Untrustful! I have greater cause indeed
To do the pleasure that allures my heart."
Then they, astonished, asked, "What cause indeed
Should lead you to the step you fain would take,
Save that which knits you to your family?"
But Mary said, "My son and grandsons true
Are dear indeed, but I have thought and heed

Of what is greater. In my secret soul,
A call divine implores and bids me rise
And follow ; nor may I resist the hand
That leads me in the way invisible,
As oft my life has proved with many signs
Unfailing.[25]" Then, with wonder still more deep,
They said, "What signs? Explain this mystery!"
Then she as one who speaks to ease the load
Of fruitless silence long and fain relieved,
Thus said : "If I indeed may tell you all,
There is a messenger that haunts my path
Through life's long journey. From the Lord, I trust,
The guidance comes to turn my thoughtless feet
Where'er His pathway leads. Shall I relate
The method, faintly seen and yet unknown
In its great working? On one silent night,
Before the Indians came and took us slaves
A little later, as I lay asleep,
A vision strange came o'er me, and I trod
In shallow water that, from step to step,
In depth increased, and, though my heart, in fear,
Would fain return, I could not find the strength
To change direction ; and to depths I moved
Still deeper, till at last, in wild distress,
My lips I seemed to feel submerge below
The breathless wave ; and then I thought to drown,
But for the hand of some one strange but kind,

Who seized mine own and led me to the safe
And happy shore." She finished, and her friends
Replied, "A dream indeed! Yet what are dreams?
Who dreams not to relate his idle dream
And then forget it? Pray you do the same!"
But still with earnest tone she held discourse
And said, "A dream it may be, but of this
What think you? E'er kind Jesse met his fate
A few days after, when the daylight shone
Across the valley, I was waking fast
And saw each form and aspect of the room
Wherein I slept, and still I looked adown
The Almstry, where my husband took a boat
And floated down the stream, nor said good-bye
Though I in tears did beckon long for word
And answer; and I rose surprised to find
My eyes still weeping while my face was wet."
They, thoughtful, heard and said, "We sleep and think
We wake, and in that fitful sleep we dream
As ever; and perchance an idle dream
May seem like life, so many dreams there are;
And who regards his dreams and does not find
Too many for concern, much more for proof
Of one that haply seems to entertain
Solution? Let your quiet peace return!"
But Mary could not cease for zeal intense,
And thus continued: "What say you to this?

Just e'er kind Jeremiah took his flight
And left the world, I, busied with my cares,
One quiet day received impressions strange,
Though in bright waking. All the world without
Was still, and not a careless wind but stirred
The slightest bough ; and still within the room
Came a soft breeze that fluttered like the sound
Of gentle wings ; and then it bore away
In the far distance, to the sweetest notes
Of faintly sounding music, dying low
In strains that seemed like angel voices tuned."
They listened as with awe ; but then they said,
" The air is full of sounds by night or day,
And, when one thinks of naught but duty near,
Is quick to work surprisal, and it fills
The ear of rapt imagination full
And makes us wonder. Turn your thought away
From this vain fancy !" But she would beseech
Once more attention. " Hear but this," she said :
" Three days ago, I from the window looked
Fain to the hill[26] where lies his body now
Who was my husband ; as I looked, I felt
A grief for loss and thought the world unkind ;
And then it seemed as if the place around
Had new creation, and I stood alone
In silent wonder though in strange delight.
Then soon I saw, as in a holy mood,

With noiseless feet, in robes of purest white,
Bright men and women, and they formed a line
Of light before me, bending halfway round
As does the moon when new within the west,
And, pausing, beckoned with their pious hands,
And whispered, 'Come away!' and I was glad
To follow with them; but just then the scene
Changed back again, and I was left alone.
I will not try you more. Say what you will!"
They thought and pondered, then one spoke at length,—
"Our sister Mary has her own desire
And present purpose. Let her seek the Lord
And bide His pleasure. He has use for all
In His great plan, and turns the scattered feet
To His safe paths, if but all trust in Him
And seek His word. Our sister goes her way,
And, praying oft, let each one seek her peace."
Then she was comforted, while those around
Withdrew with wishes kind, and she reposed
In thankfulness serene and faith sublime.

Interlude.

FRIENDS and friendships, ye that erst
So closely dwelt with me, though now
Swift change, us meeting, hath dispersed,
How vain that thoughtless pledge and vow!

We clasped our hands and gave the sign
That bore the fealties that years
Should break not; yet life's firm design
All sundered; then loss dried its tears.

Calm memory doth lightly glance
On other days, nor ask surcease
Of vantage new nor old mischance,
And kindness whispers, "Go in peace!"

THE solemn psalmist tolls the mournful knell
Of time's departed worth. Our threescore years
And ten express the comfort of our days,
And though they drag perchance to fourscore years
Their strength is labor still and endless grief,
So soon is certain death and nothingness.
Dark, dread conception! Yet the sphere of soul
Reacts and manifests its nobler hopes
And aspirations in the face of age,
And to pale dissolution often smiles
In triumph o'er the world's relentless fears.
There is an energy in human hearts
That, e'er in varied phase and circumstance,
Arouses, at the call of perfect trust
Of life and sympathy divine, to shape
The thoughts of men to frames of smiling peace
And holy pleasure, as they walk the path
That ends in death of doleful sadness free.

Thus she, whose life this simple tale records,
In fulness of the faith that blooms from love
And service constant, tried as gold is tried,
With tested pureness, in life's ripeness known
Of three score years and twelve, assumed her way
To nature's goal with sweet complacency.
In a congenial fold of kindred souls,
The mystic band in Canterbury's pale,[27]
She found the welcome sought, and, oft engaged
On duty's glad occasion, where each heart
And service leaned on each, for love's ends meet.
She watched her day glide to the sunset soft,
And rich, and glorious. Then when the shades
Of eve dropped lower, on her patient couch
She laid her down for her last strife and pledge
Of life triumphant in the grasp of death.
A hundred years were drawing to their close,[28]
A wasted frame remained their only prey,
As she lay dying, while, on either side,
A sister held her hand—an elder one,
And one a younger, meet indeed to be
Thus stationed in love's duty, as the old
And young conjoin in one in God's great scheme
Of youth eternal in the starry realm
Of blessing. E'er she loosed in perfect sleep
Pale nature's care, as, restless on the strand,
The softest waves lapse lightly to and fro,

Though the strong tide inclines but to the deep,
Her outward currents flowed and then reflowed,
Yet gently, while the torrent of her soul
Swept to the ocean of unbounded calm.
She felt no burden, but the mind of sense,
In fickle station, in pale slumbers tossed,
Moved thoughtlessly to mutter, "Have they come?"
With troubled features. Then the elder friend
And sister spoke, and gently said, "Who come?"
Then promptly said unconscious nature, "They—
The foe—the captors!" But the sister said,
"Nay, sister, foes no more can rudely harm
Our dear one now who blessed safety finds
In the Eternal Bosom." Then in calm
She lay a space, and then reacting throes
Of mindless nature murmured on her tongue,
"O tell me, am I free, and going home?"
The while the face expressed the painful doubt.
Then the kind sister said, "Yea, free indeed
From all the bonds of time, and going fast
To the bright home of ransomed spirits blest."
Then rest came o'er her, and she breathed again
As one who sleeps and dreams a pleasant dream.
An hour passed by, and then, as oft the flame,
That flickers last upon the nightly hearth,
Leaps in intenser glow to fall in dark,
The face of Mary beamed with light serene

And conscious; and, with sweetness in her words
She told her peace and said, with gentle voice,
"Dear brothers, sisters, I am going home;
The pathway opens, and the sunlight clear
Reveals the certain goal. My loved ones wait
With out-stretched arms in welcome to receive
Me coming; and in love's sweet gratitude,
I say Good-bye; be patient to the last,
And all shall follow." Then she closed her eyes,—
A few soft breathings, and the pale form sank,
And death was captor of the world's best pride.
The kind attendants, at the solemn couch,
Paused in the aspect of reflection deep,
And gave their thoughts to silence. All without
Dark autumn[29] wore dead summer's faded sheen.
A chill breath softly swept around the scene,
And, dying far away, sighed in the trees,
Sobbed in the grass, and wept among the corn.

Postlude.

REALM of splendor and delight,
From vexing bonds of time and sense,
The spirit craves ecstatic flight
To thy sweet boon of recompense;
Bright hope, expectant, longing, peers
With eager eyes to scenes to come,
And faith in confidence endears
Thy promised rest, Elysium.

Elysium! Yet while we dwell
Anticipant, a silent thought
Steals in and lures us like a spell,
Life's brief award of fulness wrought;
The bosom thrills, nor judgment deems
Earth vain nor exultation dumb,
And all the world's wide aspect seems
Thy border land, Elysium.

Then quick remembrance oft convenes
The teeming raptures of the years,
And contemplation holds its gleans
The compensation of the spheres;
And the light being haply feels
Each transport earnest of the sum
Of blessed joys when death reveals
Thy blissful walks, Elysium.

NOTES.

1. Page 5. This scene is in Hopkinton, N. H., of which Contoocook, on the river of the same name, is the north village.

2. Page 5. Gould's hill is a name of the northern brow of a ridge of land running north-easterly and south-westerly about three miles. The name Putney's hill is often given to the whole ridge.

3. Page 5. Kearsarge, the highest elevation in Merrimack county, is distinctly seen in the north-west from Gould's hill.

4. Page 5. The Minks are a collection of hills in Warner.

5. Page 7. The exact year implied was 1746.

6. Page 7. This garrison stood just a few rods southerly from the present residence of Dea. Charles A. Morrill.

7. Page 7. The site of Samuel Burbank's house is still identified by the depression of the ancient cellar on the easterly side of the road leading from Hopkinton village to Contoocook and between the houses of M. Tenney Clough and George Chase.

8. Page 7. The so called "War of the Austrian Succession," involving contention between England and France,

caused the English settlers in America much peril on account of incursions of Indians, the natural allies of the French.

9. Page 7. Louisburg, a mighty fortress of the French on Cape Breton island, was captured by the English in 1745.

10. Page 8. Putney's fort was at the same time on the southern brow of Putney's hill near the end of the village road.

11. Page 8. Kimball's fort was at the same time in the south-east part of Hopkinton, nearly opposite the present residence of James K. Story, on the main road from Hopkinton to Concord.

12. Page 8. Mary Woodwell was born April 30, 1730, and consequently was within nine days of sixteen, the day implied in the annotated line being April 21.

13. Page 8. Before the use of clocks, it was the custom to reckon time at evening by the length of candle burned.

14. Page 8. The religious temperament of David Woodwell is attested by the fact that he was one of the first members of the Hopkinton Congregational church, formed in 1757, and its second deacon, chosen in 1760. The religious character of the Woodwells and Burbanks, though established in part by church records, is assumed also in view of the prominent identification of religion in the society of the time and locality expressed.

15. Page 14. The early settlers of Warner, north of Hopkinton, were from Amesbury, Mass., and they gave the

name, New Amesbury, to the early township. The chief river of the town was called the Amesbury river. There is historical evidence that some of the early residents of the vicinity pronounced the name Almstry, and this pronunciation is retained for the sake of the meter of the verse.

16. Page 14. This spot is now in Davisville, in Warner, and the saw-mill appears to have been the first in the township. The mill was built about 1740.

17. Page 18. Mrs. Woodwell and Samuel Burbank died in prison at Quebec of yellow-fever.

18. Page 18. As the narrative hereafter shows, the early residents of Hopkinton, N. H., came from the town of the same name in Massachusetts. David Woodwell, after his ransom, evidently returned to Massachusetts, where Chelmsford raised a gratuity in aid of both the Woodwell and Burbank families. On the 5th of February, 1749, £43, 8*s*. had been collected for this purpose.

19. Page 25. The sum was equal to $18.50.

20. Page 34. Tradition says that the first orchard in the north part of Hopkinton was in close proximity to Woodwell's garrison, and, by poetic license, it is assumed that the trees were planted by the proprietor of the fort.

21. Page 39. In 1792, Josiah Corbett, his wife, and two sons, Jesse and Thomas, joined the Shakers.

22. Page 39. The Shakers have had a society in Enfield since about 1782.

23. Page 39. The Shakers believe that Christ has been made incarnate twice—once in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and once in that of Ann Lee, the founder of the sect.

24. Page 39. Jeremiah Fowler is said to have died about the year 1802.

25. Page 41. That the heroine of this story was a person of psychological gifts and experiences, there is no positive evidence; but, because such gifts and experiences are reputed among the Shakers, they are ascribed to Mary by poetic license.

26. Page 43. An ancient cemetery on Putney's hill was possibly the burial place of Jeremiah Fowler.

27. Page 46. A Shaker society has existed in Canterbury since about 1782.

28. Page 46. The heroine of this story died in her 100th year.

29. Page 48. The day was the 3d of October, 1829.

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